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Anti-Contra witness said to fabricate story

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By James Morrison
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An American adventurer who is a key witness in a conspiracy lawsuit charging Nicaragua's anti-communist rebels with murder, drug-trafficking and gun-running, never served in the Green Berets and the CIA, as he claimed, and fabricated a diary on which the case is based.

Sources say Jack Terrell, who operated under the pseudonyms of "Col. Flaco" and "Frank Winchester," made up much of the diary which claims that he and several defendants in the lawsuit plotted in December 1984 to assassinate Eden Pastora, commander of the Democratic Revolutionary Alliance, because Mr. Pastora refused to cooperate with a rival rebel faction.

Charges contained in his diary are crucial to the lawsuit, filed last week by two American free-lance journalists against 30 Americans, Nicaraguans and anti-Castro Cuban exiles, because the journalists' other primary witness to the conspiracy is a dead informant whom they never met. The journalists seek \$28.6 million in damages.

The journalists, Tony Avirgan and his wife, Martha Honey, used excerpts from Mr. Terrell's diary in an 80-page report they prepared on the 1984 assassination attempt on Mr. Pastora. Mr. Avirgan, in a press conference announcing the filing of their suit last week, said Mr. Terrell was one of their sources for the legal action.

But Tom Posey, head of Civilian Military Assistance (CMA), told The Washington Times that Mr. Terrell wrote much of his diary in a hotel room in Honduras based on stories

and newspaper articles about events that had nothing to do with Mr. Terrell.

Mr. Posey, named as one of the defendants, denies involvement in illegal activities.

He said he witnessed Mr. Terrell writing his diary in Honduras and quoted him as saying, "It makes good reading even if it isn't true. Who's to prove different?"

"His whole thing is that he wants to make a movie," Mr. Posey said, adding that Mr. Terrell had already begun working on a script. "The script makes him out as 'Rambo No. 3.'"

After enlisting Mr. Terrell to help the CMA provide non-military assistance to the rebels, Mr. Posey said he kicked him out of the organization when Mr. Terrell tried to lead CMA

members into combat inside Nicaragua.

Mr. Posey said he sent Mr. Terrell to lead a CMA team to Central America to deliver supplies to rebels of the Nicaraguan Democratic Front in Honduras, not to lead the team on what Mr. Posey called "suicide" missions.

"He made a statement to one of our men that if we lose a few Americans [inside Nicaragua] we'll get more publicity and more money," Mr. Posey said.

The civilian group recruits volunteers to transport military uniforms, medicine, food and other non-lethal supplies and help train the rebels but not help them fight the army of Nicaragua's ruling Sandinista party, he said.

Mr. Terrell never served in the U.S. military or the Central Intelligence Agency, as he claimed when he joined the CMA and later when he met a representative of Republican Sen. Jeremiah Denton of Alabama.

Mr. Posey and a Senate source say.

Neither Mr. Terrell nor the journalists' attorney could be reached for comment yesterday.

Mr. Terrell identified himself originally as "Col. Flaco" when he approached Sen. Denton's office in March claiming to represent Nicaragua's embattled Miskito Indians and to be seeking help for an Indian rebel movement, said a source who asked not to be identified.

The source said Mr. Terrell never told Sen. Denton's office about the assassination plot that, according to the two journalists, he had detailed in his diary three months earlier.

He said he served in the Green Berets in Southeast Asia and said he was a CIA agent in Angola, the source said. But investigators for Sen. Denton, a member of the Armed Services Committee, found no record of his military service and no evidence of any involvement with the CIA, the source said.

The stories of his exploits and the mystery surrounding his background earned him the nickname of "Flaco-whacko" among Mr. Denton's staff.

Mr. Posey said Mr. Terrell also called himself "Col. Flaco" and "Frank Winchester" when he joined the CMA in late 1984.

The journalists' lawsuit alleges that Mr. Posey, retired Gen. John Singlaub, a former deputy assistant secretary of defense, two ex-CIA agents and FDN leader Aldopho Calero were among a group of conspirators who dealt in cocaine, smuggled guns out of the United States and plotted assassinations of Mr. Pastora and the American ambassador to Costa Rica.

All defendants who have been reached for comment by The Washington Times and other news organizations have denied involvement in a conspiracy, calling the charges politically motivated to undercut U.S. support for the rebels.